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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

Centennial

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The First Presbyterian Church of Champaign

PASTORS OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

H. F. BOWERS
A Licentiate
December 1850—March 1851

R. H. LILLY
Stated Supply

E. K. LYNN
October 8, 1854—October 1856

JOSEPH PLATT
March 1857—March 1858

GEORGE McKINLEY
September 1858—February 1870

JOHN S. FRAME
June 1870—October 13, 1874

A. J. BERGER
June 6, 1875—May 1, 1881

CHARLES N. WILDER, D.D.
October 1881—November 1902

EDWARD W. CLIPPINGER
June 15, 1903—May 1, 1911

CHARLES RYAN ADAMS, D.D.
November 12, 1911—July 1, 1919

WILLIAM E. ROBERTS
January 1, 1920—January 1, 1923

B. J. BRINKEMA, D.D.
May 1, 1923—July 31, 1931

ADOLPH BOHN
November 1, 1931—October 31, 1938

A. RAY CARTLIDGE, D.D.
June 18, 1939—December 31, 1953

MALCOLM E. NYGREN
Associate Pastor, October 12, 1952
Pastor, April 4, 1954

REID S. RUTHERFORD
Associate Pastor, September 25, 1955—May 15, 1960

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PROGRAM

DEDICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BUILDING
THE UPPER ROOM, Sunday, May 15, 2:00 p.m.

Prelude on "Sine Nomine" (Ralph Vaughan Williams), Leo Sowerby
*Processional Hymn 336, "Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation"
*Call to Worship
*The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The Holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; And the Life everlasting. Amen.

***

Hymn of Praise----------Felix Mendelssohn
Verse I

All men, all things, all that has life and breath sing to the Lord. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord with lute and harp, in joyful song extol Him; and let all flesh magnify His might and His glory.

***

Sanctuary Choir

Dedication Prayer
Hymn of Praise
Verse II

I waited for the Lord, He inclined unto me. He heard my complaint. O bless'd are they that hope and trust in the Lord.

Sanctuary Choir

The Scripture Reading: I Kings 8:22, 23, 27-30
Hymn of Praise
Verse III

Let all men praise the Lord; in worship lowly bending on His most holy word; redeem'd from woe depending. He gracious is, and just. From childhood us doth lead. On Him we place our trust and hope in time of need. Glory and praise to God the Father, Son, be given. And to the Holy Ghost on high enthroned in Heaven. Praise to the three-one God, with powerful arm and strong. He changeth night to day. Praise Him with grateful song.

Sanctuary Choir

The Act of Dedication
Hymn of Praise
Verse IV

Ye nations—ye monarchs—thou heaven, offer to the Lord glory and might. The whole earth offer to the Lord glory and might. O give thanks to the Lord. Praise Him, all ye people, and ever praise His holy name. Sing ye the Lord, and ever praise His holy name. All that has life and breath, sing to the Lord. Hallelujah!

Sanctuary Choir

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The Sermon THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH
The Rev. A. Ray Cartlidge, D.D.

*Recessional Hymn 337, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord"

*The Benediction

Postlude—Festival Recessional on
Hymn "Regent Square"----------Vernon Griffiths

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*The congregation standing

***Delayed worshipers may be seated at these times

DEDICATION OF THE CHAPEL AND MEMORIALS

THE CHAPEL, Sunday, May 22, 2:00 p.m.

Prelude for a Ceremony on Hymn "Richmond"------Vernon Griffiths

*Processional Hymn 333, "The Church's One Foundation"

*The Gloria Patri

***

The Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 3:10-23

Prayer

The Dedication of the Chapel

*The Act of Dedication

Dearly beloved Brethren: Forasmuch as it pleased Almighty God to put it into the heart of His servants to build this house for His worship, let us now fulfill the godly purpose for which we are assembled of dedicating it to the honor of God's most holy name.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father who art in heaven:

To Thee we dedicate this house.

Lord Jesus, Son of God, Saviour of the world, Head of the Body which is the Church:

To Thee we dedicate this house.

Spirit of God, given to be our abiding Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter; Lord and Giver of life:

To Thee we dedicate this house.

Hymn

The Dedication of Memorials

Prayer

*Hymn 479, "Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds"

*The Benediction

Postlude—"Dedication"----------Jaromir Weinberger

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*The congregation standing

***Delayed worshipers may be seated at these times

THE HISTORY OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JUST AS in the life of a man, there are in the life of a church epochal events which stand alone in significance and importance. We believe that the dedication of our Christian Education Building is such an event.

What is the source of the active and vibrant church we know today? The church by its nature is an active combination of the benevolent goodness of our Creator and the best works of man. We must recognize that not the least of God's gifts to us is found in the lives of godly men and women, the fruits of whose devotion we enjoy. Because this is so, we should seek to understand the beginnings of our church. In dedicating this new building, we seek spiritual communion with our forebears, whose vision and foresight brought us to this milestone in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois.

One hundred ten years ago, in September of 1850, Robert A. Dean presented himself to the Presbytery of Palestine, meeting in Grandview, Illinois. He represented eight dedicated church people, and asked that they be authorized to establish a Presbyterian Church. The petition was granted, and Reverend John A. Steele was appointed by Presbytery to effect the organization. Robert A. Dean was constituted as a ruling elder; the remaining seven founders were Martha Dean, Adam and Rebecca Karr, John J. and Sarah B. Rea, and Solomon and Tamar Campbell.

In a letter written by Mr. Dean in 1876, he describes the very early days of the church:

> The country was so beautiful and inviting that I felt it must

soon be occupied by a dense population; and that the church must have a beginning and it may be that the Lord had directed me there for that purpose, and to act as it were, for a nucleus around which other Presbyterians might gather. . . . Thoughtful persons might ask: what at the time of this organization was the condition and prospects of this vicinity? As to the now beautiful and prosperous city of Champaign with its 6,000 people (1876) it was unknown even in name. . . . Deers were numerous and at night the prairie wolves broke the stillness of the night with their howls.

I made it my business to inquire of everyone with whom I had acquaintance whether they had ever been professors of religion, and if so, with what church they had formerly been connected. In this way, I soon found some 4 or 5 families who at some previous time had been connected with one or another branches of the Presbyterian Church. . . . They all expressed a willingness to enter into an organization.

Most of these families had settled in the western edge of what was then known as the Sangamon Timber, an area south and east of Mahomet. In 1850 the population of Champaign County was 2,400 people, and only one or two houses stood within the present city limits of Champaign, Illinois. However, great changes resulted from the location of the right of way of the Illinois Central Railroad in 1851. This event touched off a great tide of immigration. A few houses were erected along what was then called Springfield Road (now Springfield Avenue) adjacent to what is presently Neil Street. It is understood that Dean lived in this area, and he recalls that during the course of one evening he entertained 13 men, nearly all Presbyterians, who were seeking homes and were anxious to settle in the vicinity of the new church.

Mr. H. F. Bowen, a licentiate for the Presbytery of New Brunswick, had been sent out to minister to the needs of the infant church in December of 1850, but ill health forced his withdrawal. The pulpit was vacant until July 1851, at which time the Reverend Robert H. Lilly was sent to lead the church. Services were held irregularly and steady progress was difficult.

July 25, 1854, was a banner day in the history of our community. This day saw the first train on the Illinois Central reach what was then known as West Urbana. Our Church had held services first in the Urbana Courthouse, then the Schoolhouse, and now frequently in the Illinois Central Freight Depot. Fortunately, trains did not run on Sundays.

Then, for the first time, the church began a building of its own. In 1854 Messrs. Farnham, Clark and White donated two lots, the same two lots on which our present church building stands. At this site a frame building was erected during 1854-5 at a cost of $1,700.00. It is interesting to note that in 1854 a fairly large creek ran through what is now West Side Park, and drainage at best was most difficult. The church was erected on wooden posts with exposed floor joists. During the wet spring season the space beneath the church

was a natural hog wallow, and often the parishioners at their Sunday morning worship were disturbed by the sounds of the hogs scratching their backs on these same floor joists.

Although these early days were challenging, they were fraught with difficulties. In 1857 Reverend Joseph Platt, then pastor of the church, noted:

> At my first sermon I had six hearers. The next Sabbath there were present 12 auditors. Our house of worship was occupied in common with Methodists, Baptists, and others. Later in the year, the pews were sold and the bills paid. 49 members were added to the rolls.

Missionary spirit was never stronger than in the early church. As early as December 28, 1856, 10 members were dismissed to form the First Presbyterian Church of Urbana, Illinois, and on April 10, 1858, the staggering number of 44 were dismissed to begin the First Presbyterian Church of Middletown (now Mahomet). In June of 1874, 9 members of our church founded the Prairie View Presbyterian Church.

By 1865 it became apparent that the original house of worship was much too small to accommodate a most active congregation in a fast growing community. The officers of the church under the leadership of the Reverend George McKinley employed architects to design a new building. At this time membership totalled 137. Faith in God, and in the future of the newly organized town of Champaign, moved these men and women to build for the future. Plans were approved and costs estimated at over $22,000. About one-half of this amount was subscribed by the spring of 1867 and work began. Before severe winter weather and the depletion of funds forced a halt to building activity, the first floor was completed. During the winter months, another canvass of the members was made and an additional $6,000 was collected. This, with a mortgage underwritten by the individual members of the church, was sufficient to allow the building to be completed in 1869. The mortgage notes which had been assumed by individual members were donated to the church as a memorial offering in 1870.

Now, while this is an accounting of the building of the church, it does not adequately describe the hardships, privations, and true dedication of the saints who made up the congregation. We are told that the church treasurer went out among the members each Saturday and collected enough to pay the workmen for the week's labor. One member sold 40 acres of Champaign County farm land to raise money to further the construction and many others who were unable to give money donated weeks of manual labor instead. These were bleak years, pioneering years. In 1960 we can scarcely conceive of the sacrifice necessary for just 137 men and women to build a $23,000 church.

We are indebted to the Reverend A. J. Lyenberger for his history of the church written in comprehensive and interesting style in November of 1876. He wrote in closing: "This church has been trained to be, and in fact, has become, one of the most liberal in the state.

The real history can never be written. Unwritten is the inner history of self-denial, struggles and prayers."

After the building was finished, there remained many additions and furnishings to make it complete. In 1874 the ladies of the church raised $1,200 to purchase an organ. In the next few years the sanctuary was frescoed and the pulpit-choir loft area improved. The old white church, built in 1854, was moved from the church site and used by a Miss Chapin for a Women's Seminary until the University of Illinois admitted women to the student body. It was then moved to become a residence.

September 12, 1882, marked the signing of an agreement between First Church and various contractors to complete the towers and purchase and erect a suitable bell in the north tower. Money was subscribed, the work completed on schedule and the new church bell rang in the year of 1883.

July 15, 1885 saw another forward step taken. We acquired the Conklin property adjacent to the church building. The purpose: future erection of a parsonage or manse. The members responded to the needs set forth, and construction was begun in 1900, and by September 1901 the completed manse at 311 West Hill Street was ready for occupancy by the Reverend C. N. Wilder.

From 1900 onward, steady progress in all fields was apparent. Membership rose for the first time above 500 and the annual church budget in 1909 was $9,400.00 of which $2,600 was spent for benevolences. During this period, in a letter dated June 1903, the Reverend E. W. Clippinger, noted to a friend that the University of Illinois had grown to 3000 students. It was his considered opinion, he wrote, that a regular or at least a student pastor should be appointed to minister to the needs of the college age population on a full time basis. To back up his convictions, he appeared before the Synod of Illinois and made this recommendation, and 1911 saw the establishment of his dream in the form of McKinley Foundation on the campus. The new church was named to honor Senator W. B. McKinley, whose gift of $30,000 made the project possible.

During Church School Session in First Church on Sunday morning, March 8, 1909, disaster struck. A fire was caused, it is thought, by sparks falling on the wooden shingle roof. After the children were evacuated, members of the church and the fire department succeeded in subduing the blaze but not until it had completely destroyed one section of the roof, and the combination of fire, water and smoke had ruined the organ, the choir loft, the carpeting and many pews and benches. There was also substantial damage to windows and frames. Characteristic of First Church members, scarcely had the smoke and debris been cleared away than estimates were ready not only to repair the damage but to improve the plant. The wing which now houses the parlor was erected, restoration of the sanctuary was completed, a new and improved organ was installed, and through one of the gifts of Senator McKinley, the elevator was placed in operation. The final cost was in excess of $22,000.00.

With these improvements completed, a rapid expansion of members took place. During 1917, through the efforts of the Reverend C. R. Adams and lay evangelists, one hundred new names were added to the swelling church roll . . . not until the 1940's would this be repeated. Champaign began to take on the appearance it has today . . . that of a highly transient community. The mid 20's were years of serenity and progress . . . years in which good works of men and their Maker were much in evidence.

With the close of the 1920 decade, also came the Great Depression. By mid-year 1931 confidence was at low ebb. Breadlines, unemployment and lack of money were the subjects of discussion of the day. Any expenditure, necessary or otherwise, took considerable fortitude. It was at this time, under the leadership of the Reverend Adolph Bohn, the congregation recognized an opportunity coincident with the government public works program to effect some much needed repairs and add church school space. An area had been long needed to serve as classroom space on Sunday, and to be utilized as a general meeting area for Men's Club, Women's Association and other large gatherings. Plans were drawn, foundations strengthened, the basement area fully excavated, and from this came our kitchen area and what is now Centennial Hall. Since 1933 thousands of young people have learned the meaning of the gospel in this room and many delightful evenings of fellowship and learning have paid tribute to the fortitude, foresight and sacrifice of these recent-day church leaders.

The 1940's brought war, shortages and depletions. The aftermath saw one of the greatest periods of growth of First Presbyterian Church of Champaign. Dr. A. Ray Cartlidge and the officers of the church felt that the 100th Anniversary of that eventful day in 1850 should be the time to restore, replace and add to the structure those changes necessary to gird us for the challenges of the years ahead. The Centennial Committee was formed and plans were set forth. For the first time, a congregation wide drive was inaugurated, with a goal of $100,000 set and achieved. This was to pay for repairs, renovations, and a much needed new manse. By 1950 the congregation numbered 1400 and church school rolls were 500. Among the features of renovation were an enlarged choir loft, intensive redecoration of the sanctuary, and modernization of the basement area which was renamed Centennial Hall in honor of the occasion.

The most recent missionary effort came in the period 1956-7 when for the fifth time in its history our church saw a need, formed study committees, helped to finance, and send out her own members to aid in the beginnings of a new Presbyterian Church. This is now called Westminster Presbyterian Church, and is located in the newly developed southwestern section of our city.

Then, in 1958, as it seems to come to each new generation of Presbyterians, the challenge came to us. The Church School which had grown from most humble beginnings, outgrew the church building, even with double sessions. Noise, overcrowding and inadequate facilities made proper teaching an almost impossible task.

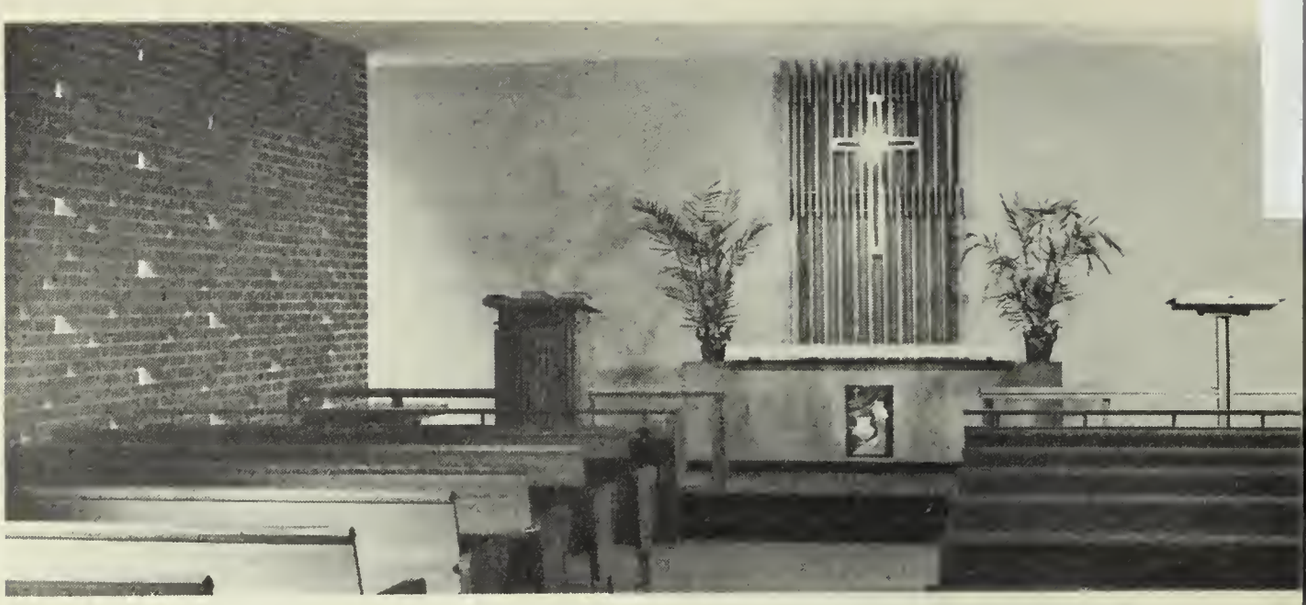
The church had acquired the two pieces of property south of the site on Church Street in 1957 through foresight and a series of fortuitous circumstances. Now the question was whether to build immediately or wait for more favorable times. An economic recession was in progress. When one looks back over the history of this church it seems that decisions which involve large scale financing always manifested themselves when economic times were less than booming. 1957-8 was certainly no exception and many long and arduous sessions were the lot of the many boards and committees which debated the problem under the guidance of the Reverend Malcolm Nygren. To seek pledges for the long dreamed of Christian Education Building and meet with only limited success might be the worst kind of failure, for the Long Range Plan Committee did not want to burden future generations of First Church families with an insurmountable mortgage. Estimates of costs for the building needed ranged from $250,000 to $500,000.

Late one afternoon, after long and earnest truth seeking, it was decided that the time to build was now. Happily, the congregation, at a special meeting overwhelmingly agreed.

Assistance of a fund raising organization was sought and found, and during the spring of 1958, the drive began. Once underway, the entire congregation responded vigorously. At a series of dinners, we heard about the plans, the hopes and the dreams of First Church. As workers were recruited and the pledging began, confidence began to mount. Who can forget the first few report dinners when group after group reported pledges which exceeded our wildest expectations? As one looked around, we could not help but notice that this was in truth a church-wide project. In some capacity or another, every family in First Church was represented. The support was completely wholehearted. By the end of May 1958, the drive was complete, the fund oversubscribed, and the new Christian Education Building that we dedicate today was assured.

Throughout its history, when the challenge has been thrown down, the members of First Church, with God's help, have responded. In this narrative appear but a few of the names of the 5,500 members associated with the church since its founding in 1850. All have contributed—some in great degree and some in lesser ways, but all in faith and loyalty.

Our generation of church people humbly joins ranks with those before us, who through their dedication and sacrifice have worshipped God at this place. We pray that in the future, we and those who follow us will continue in the footsteps of those whose example of fortitude, courage and foresight helped to build God's house to its present state of being. The work which they began is not finished, nor will it be soon. Every new generation will face new challenges at First Church, for the church must always change to meet the needs of our changing community.



THE GREAT DESERT

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Mr. & Mrs. Perry Innis
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Mr. F. A. Luyties
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Mr. & Mrs. W. T. Wooley
Mrs. William Young
Miss Louise Zilly
Mrs. R. C. Zuppke

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Mrs. H. R. Bresee
John W. Bush
Carl G. Dohme
Mrs. R. J. Garrard
Willard S. Hansen
W. W. Hay
Robert W. Jugenheimer
Chas. A. Keener
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Donald Ross
R. E. Shelton
Mrs. Hugh G. Wales
Gene Wilder

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Mr. Hurshal Tummelson, Jr.

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William L. Julian
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Ray Livasy
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James W. O'Neil
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Kenneth W. Stotler
Harold C. Vance
W. T. Wooley

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Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Edwards } Program
Mr. & Mrs. William R. Kuiken }
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth C. Kellerhals, Membership

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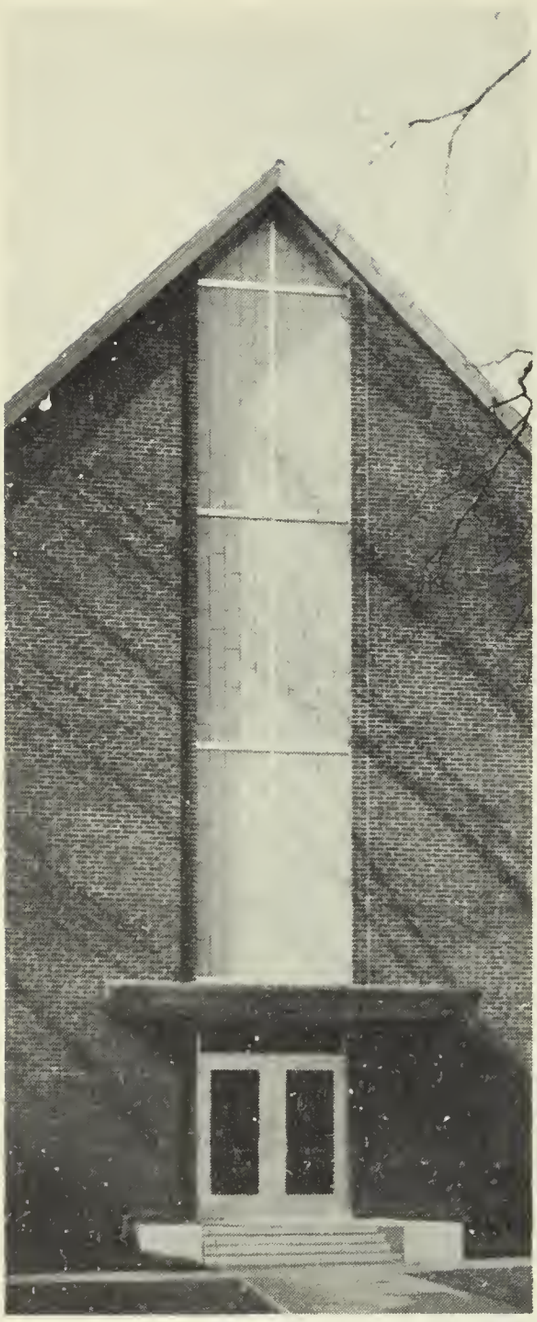
W. Frank Burns, President
French Fraker, Vice President
James B. Andrews, Jr., Secretary
James W. O'Neil, Treasurer

Women's Association

Mrs. W. Frank Burns, President
Mrs. Carl G. Dohme, 1st Vice President
Mrs. William W. Froom, 2nd Vice President
Mrs. J. C. Gabbard, 3rd Vice President
Mrs. Wayne Bever, Secretary
Mrs. Joe C. Sutton, Treasurer

United Presbyterian Youth

James Cook, President
Bryan Briggs, Vice President
Virginia Taylor, Secretary
Gail Froom, Treasurer



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Centennial

Centennial

The First Presbyterian Church of Champaign

PASTORS OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

H. F. BOWERS
A Licentiate
December 1850—March 1851

R. H. LILLY
Stated Supply

E. K. LYNN
October 8, 1854—October 1856

JOSEPH PLATT
March 1857—March 1858

GEORGE McKINLEY
September 1858—February 1870

JOHN S. FRAME
June 1870—October 13, 1874

A. J. BERGER
June 6, 1875—May 1, 1881

CHARLES N. WILDER, D.D.
October 1881—November 1902

EDWARD W. CLIPPINGER
June 15, 1903—May 1, 1911

CHARLES RYAN ADAMS, D.D.
November 12, 1911—July 1, 1919

WILLIAM E. ROBERTS
January 1, 1920—January 1, 1923

B. J. BRINKEMA, D.D.
May 1, 1923—July 31, 1931

ADOLPH BOHN
November 1, 1931—October 31, 1938

A. RAY CARTLIDGE, D.D.
June 18, 1939—December 31, 1953

MALCOLM E. NYGREN
Associate Pastor, October 12, 1952
Pastor, April 4, 1954

REID S. RUTHERFORD
Associate Pastor, September 25, 1955—May 15. 1960

Centennial

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Associate Pastor, September 25, 1955—May 15, 1960

PROGRAM

DEDICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BUILDING
THE UPPER ROOM, Sunday, May 15, 2:00 p.m.

Prelude on "Sine Nomine" (Ralph Vaughan Williams), Leo Sowerby
*Processional Hymn 336, "Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation"
*Call to Worship
*The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The Holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; And the Life everlasting. Amen.

***

Hymn of Praise----------Felix Mendelssohn
Verse I

All men, all things, all that has life and breath sing to the Lord. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord with lute and harp, in joyful song extol Him; and let all flesh magnify His might and His glory.

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Sanctuary Choir

Dedication Prayer
Hymn of Praise
Verse II

I waited for the Lord, He inclined unto me. He heard my complaint. O bless'd are they that hope and trust in the Lord.

Sanctuary Choir

The Scripture Reading: I Kings 8:22, 23, 27-30
Hymn of Praise
Verse III

Let all men praise the Lord; in worship lowly bending on His most holy word; redeem'd from woe depending. He gracious is, and just. From childhood us doth lead. On Him we place our trust and hope in time of need. Glory and praise to God the Father, Son, be given. And to the Holy Ghost on high enthroned in Heaven. Praise to the three-one God, with powerful arm and strong. He changeth night to day. Praise Him with grateful song.

Sanctuary Choir

The Act of Dedication
Hymn of Praise
Verse IV

Ye nations—ye monarchs—thou heaven, offer to the Lord glory and might. The whole earth offer to the Lord glory and might. O give thanks to the Lord. Praise Him, all ye people, and ever praise His holy name. Sing ye the Lord, and ever praise His holy name. All that has life and breath, sing to the Lord. Hallelujah!

Sanctuary Choir

The Sermon THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH
The Rev. A. Ray Cartlidge, D.D.

*Recessional Hymn 337, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord"

*The Benediction

Postlude—Festival Recessional on
Hymn "Regent Square"----------Vernon Griffiths

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*The congregation standing

***Delayed worshipers may be seated at these times

DEDICATION OF THE CHAPEL AND MEMORIALS

THE CHAPEL, Sunday, May 22, 2:00 p.m.

Prelude for a Ceremony on Hymn "Richmond"------Vernon Griffiths

*Processional Hymn 333, "The Church's One Foundation"

*The Gloria Patri

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The Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 3:10-23

Prayer

The Dedication of the Chapel

*The Act of Dedication

Dearly beloved Brethren: Forasmuch as it pleased Almighty God to put it into the heart of His servants to build this house for His worship, let us now fulfill the godly purpose for which we are assembled of dedicating it to the honor of God's most holy name.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Father who art in heaven:

To Thee we dedicate this house.

Lord Jesus, Son of God, Saviour of the world, Head of the Body which is the Church:

To Thee we dedicate this house.

Spirit of God, given to be our abiding Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter; Lord and Giver of life:

To Thee we dedicate this house.

Hymn

The Dedication of Memorials

Prayer

*Hymn 479, "Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds"

*The Benediction

Postlude—"Dedication"----------Jaromir Weinberger

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*The congregation standing

***Delayed worshipers may be seated at these times

THE HISTORY OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JUST AS in the life of a man, there are in the life of a church epochal events which stand alone in significance and importance. We believe that the dedication of our Christian Education Building is such an event.

What is the source of the active and vibrant church we know today? The church by its nature is an active combination of the benevolent goodness of our Creator and the best works of man. We must recognize that not the least of God's gifts to us is found in the lives of godly men and women, the fruits of whose devotion we enjoy. Because this is so, we should seek to understand the beginnings of our church. In dedicating this new building, we seek spiritual communion with our forebears, whose vision and foresight brought us to this milestone in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Champaign, Illinois.

One hundred ten years ago, in September of 1850, Robert A. Dean presented himself to the Presbytery of Palestine, meeting in Grandview, Illinois. He represented eight dedicated church people, and asked that they be authorized to establish a Presbyterian Church. The petition was granted, and Reverend John A. Steele was appointed by Presbytery to effect the organization. Robert A. Dean was constituted as a ruling elder; the remaining seven founders were Martha Dean, Adam and Rebecca Karr, John J. and Sarah B. Rea, and Solomon and Tamar Campbell.

In a letter written by Mr. Dean in 1876, he describes the very early days of the church:

> The country was so beautiful and inviting that I felt it must

soon be occupied by a dense population; and that the church must have a beginning and it may be that the Lord had directed me there for that purpose, and to act as it were, for a nucleus around which other Presbyterians might gather. . . . Thoughtful persons might ask: what at the time of this organization was the condition and prospects of this vicinity? As to the now beautiful and prosperous city of Champaign with its 6,000 people (1876) it was unknown even in name. . . . Deers were numerous and at night the prairie wolves broke the stillness of the night with their howls.

I made it my business to inquire of everyone with whom I had acquaintance whether they had ever been professors of religion, and if so, with what church they had formerly been connected. In this way, I soon found some 4 or 5 families who at some previous time had been connected with one or another branches of the Presbyterian Church. . . . They all expressed a willingness to enter into an organization.

Most of these families had settled in the western edge of what was then known as the Sangamon Timber, an area south and east of Mahomet. In 1850 the population of Champaign County was 2,400 people, and only one or two houses stood within the present city limits of Champaign, Illinois. However, great changes resulted from the location of the right of way of the Illinois Central Railroad in 1851. This event touched off a great tide of immigration. A few houses were erected along what was then called Springfield Road (now Springfield Avenue) adjacent to what is presently Neil Street. It is understood that Dean lived in this area, and he recalls that during the course of one evening he entertained 13 men, nearly all Presbyterians, who were seeking homes and were anxious to settle in the vicinity of the new church.

Mr. H. F. Bowen, a licentiate for the Presbytery of New Brunswick, had been sent out to minister to the needs of the infant church in December of 1850, but ill health forced his withdrawal. The pulpit was vacant until July 1851, at which time the Reverend Robert H. Lilly was sent to lead the church. Services were held irregularly and steady progress was difficult.

July 25, 1854, was a banner day in the history of our community. This day saw the first train on the Illinois Central reach what was then known as West Urbana. Our Church had held services first in the Urbana Courthouse, then the Schoolhouse, and now frequently in the Illinois Central Freight Depot. Fortunately, trains did not run on Sundays.

Then, for the first time, the church began a building of its own. In 1854 Messrs. Farnham, Clark and White donated two lots, the same two lots on which our present church building stands. At this site a frame building was erected during 1854-5 at a cost of $1,700.00. It is interesting to note that in 1854 a fairly large creek ran through what is now West Side Park, and drainage at best was most difficult. The church was erected on wooden posts with exposed floor joists. During the wet spring season the space beneath the church

was a natural hog wallow, and often the parishioners at their Sunday morning worship were disturbed by the sounds of the hogs scratching their backs on these same floor joists.

Although these early days were challenging, they were fraught with difficulties. In 1857 Reverend Joseph Platt, then pastor of the church, noted:

> At my first sermon I had six hearers. The next Sabbath there were present 12 auditors. Our house of worship was occupied in common with Methodists, Baptists, and others. Later in the year, the pews were sold and the bills paid. 49 members were added to the rolls.

Missionary spirit was never stronger than in the early church. As early as December 28, 1856, 10 members were dismissed to form the First Presbyterian Church of Urbana, Illinois, and on April 10, 1858, the staggering number of 44 were dismissed to begin the First Presbyterian Church of Middletown (now Mahomet). In June of 1874, 9 members of our church founded the Prairie View Presbyterian Church.

By 1865 it became apparent that the original house of worship was much too small to accommodate a most active congregation in a fast growing community. The officers of the church under the leadership of the Reverend George McKinley employed architects to design a new building. At this time membership totalled 137. Faith in God, and in the future of the newly organized town of Champaign, moved these men and women to build for the future. Plans were approved and costs estimated at over $22,000. About one-half of this amount was subscribed by the spring of 1867 and work began. Before severe winter weather and the depletion of funds forced a halt to building activity, the first floor was completed. During the winter months, another canvass of the members was made and an additional $6,000 was collected. This, with a mortgage underwritten by the individual members of the church, was sufficient to allow the building to be completed in 1869. The mortgage notes which had been assumed by individual members were donated to the church as a memorial offering in 1870.

Now, while this is an accounting of the building of the church, it does not adequately describe the hardships, privations, and true dedication of the saints who made up the congregation. We are told that the church treasurer went out among the members each Saturday and collected enough to pay the workmen for the week's labor. One member sold 40 acres of Champaign County farm land to raise money to further the construction and many others who were unable to give money donated weeks of manual labor instead. These were bleak years, pioneering years. In 1960 we can scarcely conceive of the sacrifice necessary for just 137 men and women to build a $23,000 church.

We are indebted to the Reverend A. J. Lyenberger for his history of the church written in comprehensive and interesting style in November of 1876. He wrote in closing: "This church has been trained to be, and in fact, has become, one of the most liberal in the state.

The real history can never be written. Unwritten is the inner history of self-denial, struggles and prayers."

After the building was finished, there remained many additions and furnishings to make it complete. In 1874 the ladies of the church raised $1,200 to purchase an organ. In the next few years the sanctuary was frescoed and the pulpit-choir loft area improved. The old white church, built in 1854, was moved from the church site and used by a Miss Chapin for a Women's Seminary until the University of Illinois admitted women to the student body. It was then moved to become a residence.

September 12, 1882, marked the signing of an agreement between First Church and various contractors to complete the towers and purchase and erect a suitable bell in the north tower. Money was subscribed, the work completed on schedule and the new church bell rang in the year of 1883.

July 15, 1885 saw another forward step taken. We acquired the Conklin property adjacent to the church building. The purpose: future erection of a parsonage or manse. The members responded to the needs set forth, and construction was begun in 1900, and by September 1901 the completed manse at 311 West Hill Street was ready for occupancy by the Reverend C. N. Wilder.

From 1900 onward, steady progress in all fields was apparent. Membership rose for the first time above 500 and the annual church budget in 1909 was $9,400.00 of which $2,600 was spent for benevolences. During this period, in a letter dated June 1903, the Reverend E. W. Clippinger, noted to a friend that the University of Illinois had grown to 3000 students. It was his considered opinion, he wrote, that a regular or at least a student pastor should be appointed to minister to the needs of the college age population on a full time basis. To back up his convictions, he appeared before the Synod of Illinois and made this recommendation, and 1911 saw the establishment of his dream in the form of McKinley Foundation on the campus. The new church was named to honor Senator W. B. McKinley, whose gift of $30,000 made the project possible.

During Church School Session in First Church on Sunday morning, March 8, 1909, disaster struck. A fire was caused, it is thought, by sparks falling on the wooden shingle roof. After the children were evacuated, members of the church and the fire department succeeded in subduing the blaze but not until it had completely destroyed one section of the roof, and the combination of fire, water and smoke had ruined the organ, the choir loft, the carpeting and many pews and benches. There was also substantial damage to windows and frames. Characteristic of First Church members, scarcely had the smoke and debris been cleared away than estimates were ready not only to repair the damage but to improve the plant. The wing which now houses the parlor was erected, restoration of the sanctuary was completed, a new and improved organ was installed, and through one of the gifts of Senator McKinley, the elevator was placed in operation. The final cost was in excess of $22,000.00.

With these improvements completed, a rapid expansion of members took place. During 1917, through the efforts of the Reverend C. R. Adams and lay evangelists, one hundred new names were added to the swelling church roll . . . not until the 1940's would this be repeated. Champaign began to take on the appearance it has today . . . that of a highly transient community. The mid 20's were years of serenity and progress . . . years in which good works of men and their Maker were much in evidence.

With the close of the 1920 decade, also came the Great Depression. By mid-year 1931 confidence was at low ebb. Breadlines, unemployment and lack of money were the subjects of discussion of the day. Any expenditure, necessary or otherwise, took considerable fortitude. It was at this time, under the leadership of the Reverend Adolph Bohn, the congregation recognized an opportunity coincident with the government public works program to effect some much needed repairs and add church school space. An area had been long needed to serve as classroom space on Sunday, and to be utilized as a general meeting area for Men's Club, Women's Association and other large gatherings. Plans were drawn, foundations strengthened, the basement area fully excavated, and from this came our kitchen area and what is now Centennial Hall. Since 1933 thousands of young people have learned the meaning of the gospel in this room and many delightful evenings of fellowship and learning have paid tribute to the fortitude, foresight and sacrifice of these recent-day church leaders.

The 1940's brought war, shortages and depletions. The aftermath saw one of the greatest periods of growth of First Presbyterian Church of Champaign. Dr. A. Ray Cartlidge and the officers of the church felt that the 100th Anniversary of that eventful day in 1850 should be the time to restore, replace and add to the structure those changes necessary to gird us for the challenges of the years ahead. The Centennial Committee was formed and plans were set forth. For the first time, a congregation wide drive was inaugurated, with a goal of $100,000 set and achieved. This was to pay for repairs, renovations, and a much needed new manse. By 1950 the congregation numbered 1400 and church school rolls were 500. Among the features of renovation were an enlarged choir loft, intensive redecoration of the sanctuary, and modernization of the basement area which was renamed Centennial Hall in honor of the occasion.

The most recent missionary effort came in the period 1956-7 when for the fifth time in its history our church saw a need, formed study committees, helped to finance, and send out her own members to aid in the beginnings of a new Presbyterian Church. This is now called Westminster Presbyterian Church, and is located in the newly developed southwestern section of our city.

Then, in 1958, as it seems to come to each new generation of Presbyterians, the challenge came to us. The Church School which had grown from most humble beginnings, outgrew the church building, even with double sessions. Noise, overcrowding and inadequate facilities made proper teaching an almost impossible task.

The church had acquired the two pieces of property south of the site on Church Street in 1957 through foresight and a series of fortuitous circumstances. Now the question was whether to build immediately or wait for more favorable times. An economic recession was in progress. When one looks back over the history of this church it seems that decisions which involve large scale financing always manifested themselves when economic times were less than booming. 1957-8 was certainly no exception and many long and arduous sessions were the lot of the many boards and committees which debated the problem under the guidance of the Reverend Malcolm Nygren. To seek pledges for the long dreamed of Christian Education Building and meet with only limited success might be the worst kind of failure, for the Long Range Plan Committee did not want to burden future generations of First Church families with an insurmountable mortgage. Estimates of costs for the building needed ranged from $250,000 to $500,000.

Late one afternoon, after long and earnest truth seeking, it was decided that the time to build was now. Happily, the congregation, at a special meeting overwhelmingly agreed.

Assistance of a fund raising organization was sought and found, and during the spring of 1958, the drive began. Once underway, the entire congregation responded vigorously. At a series of dinners, we heard about the plans, the hopes and the dreams of First Church. As workers were recruited and the pledging began, confidence began to mount. Who can forget the first few report dinners when group after group reported pledges which exceeded our wildest expectations? As one looked around, we could not help but notice that this was in truth a church-wide project. In some capacity or another, every family in First Church was represented. The support was completely wholehearted. By the end of May 1958, the drive was complete, the fund oversubscribed, and the new Christian Education Building that we dedicate today was assured.

Throughout its history, when the challenge has been thrown down, the members of First Church, with God's help, have responded. In this narrative appear but a few of the names of the 5,500 members associated with the church since its founding in 1850. All have contributed—some in great degree and some in lesser ways, but all in faith and loyalty.

Our generation of church people humbly joins ranks with those before us, who through their dedication and sacrifice have worshipped God at this place. We pray that in the future, we and those who follow us will continue in the footsteps of those whose example of fortitude, courage and foresight helped to build God's house to its present state of being. The work which they began is not finished, nor will it be soon. Every new generation will face new challenges at First Church, for the church must always change to meet the needs of our changing community.

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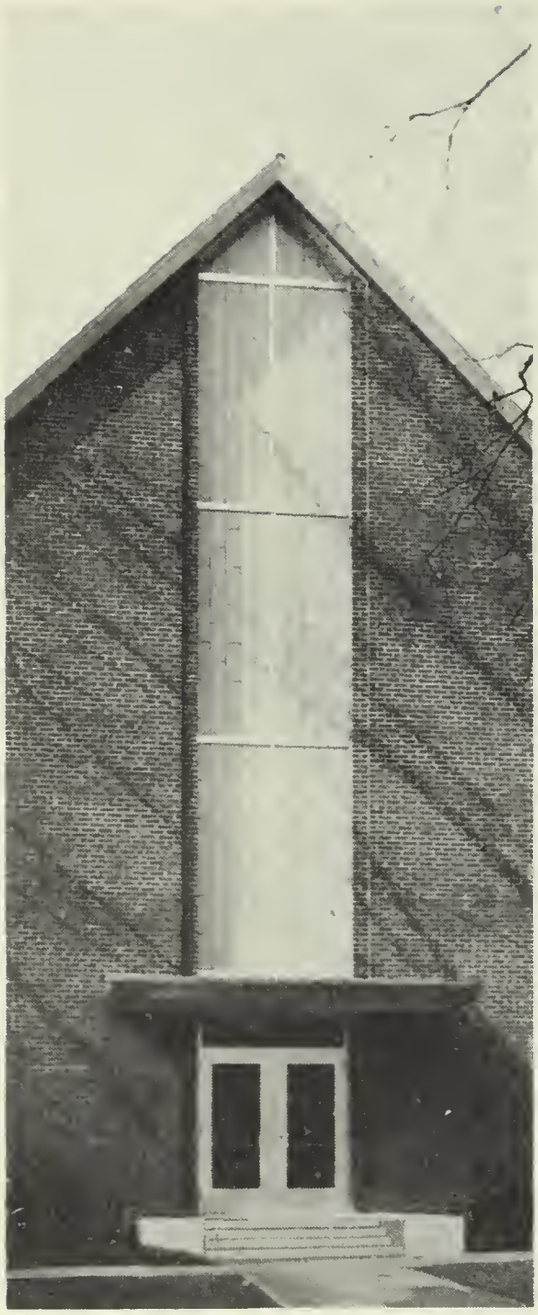

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